

[FOR THE SOLDIERS.]

No. 27.

## THE LIFE PRESERVER.

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COMMENCING a long journey which was to take me upon most of our western lakes and rivers, I took the precaution to provide myself with a life-preserver of the best construction. My reasons for doing this were these: I had always felt great confidence in these simple instruments. They are constructed on principles perfectly philosophical. Several individuals from the circle of my own acquaintance had been saved by them when in imminent peril. The expense of the article was very trifling. It was not at all in the way. So far from this, I found it a positive convenience, as a cushion by day and a pillow by night.

My custom was, every night before retiring to sleep, to examine my life-preserver, and see that it was where I could place my hand upon it in an instant; and often when the winds blew, and the waves dashed against the boat, I felt a sense of security in the possession of that which, with the blessing of God, might preserve me in an emergency; and this of itself amply repaid me for my purchase.

Soon after entering the Mississippi river, we were not a little agitated by an accident which befell the boat. The night was dark and tempestuous, and the "Father of waters" angry and frightful. The passengers sprung from their berths, and rushed together into the main saloon. The accident proved to be of small consequence; and the alarm very soon subsided.

Returning to my state room with this incident fresh in mind I fell into a sort of waking dream. I thought I was on one of our inland seas, in a violent tempest. Our vessel, dismasted

and disabled, was rapidly driving on a lee shore. Death, in one of its most frightful forms, was staring us in the face, for the captain was heard to say, "We are all gone for this world." The passengers were evidently making ready for the last struggle. And now I observed, for the first time, that some, amid the general consternation, seemed perfectly calm and composed. They were very solemn but gave no sign of fear. On looking again, I saw that they were provided with life-preservers, large and strong, of the very best kind. These they had already attached to their persons, and feeling the utmost confidence in this means of preservation, they were quietly awaiting the issue. An emotion of joy was depicted on their countenances, as if they were thanking God that they had secured, in good season what was now of great price.

But how shall I describe the terrors and dismay of the other passengers, as they passed to and fro before my eye. Very few had any hope of reaching the shore. Their faces were pale, and they wrung their hands in despair.

"What a fool I was," said one. "that I did not buy a life-preserver before I left home. *I always meant to do it.* They were exposed for sale right before my eye every day. My friends entreated me to procure one, and I promised that I would. I thought I could obtain one at any time. *But I put it off, and now it is too late.*"

"*I did not believe there was any danger.*" said another. "I have passed over these lakes many times, and never saw such a storm before. 'Tis true, I was warned that come they would, in an hour when I looked not for them; but as I had passed safely without a life-preserver before *I concluded to run the risk again.*"

Another I observed hastening to his trunk, and returning instantly with the case of a life preserver in his hand, but an expression of blank despair on his countenance. The article had once been good, but he *had not taken care of it.* He had thrown it loosely among his effects, and it had been punctured by a pin. It was now a mockery of his woe. He tried to mend it, but this was impossible. There was not time for this.

Another produced with great joy what seemed an excellent life preserver, but when he proceeded to adjust it, he found that he had been cheated. *It was a counterfeit article.* He did not procure it at the right place. *To all appearance it was sound.* It would retain its shape and buoyancy for a while

but would not *bear the pressure of a man's whole weight*. It would answer very well for a few minutes in smooth water, but *could not be relied on in an emergency*. He had never examined it before; and now, in the hour of need, found it utterly worthless.

At length my eye was arrested by a young man who had been notorious throughout the voyage for his gayety and frivolity. On one occasion, during a pleasant day, he had made sport of those who had wisely prepared for the time of peril. He pronounced their forethought a waste of money. And now I saw him addressing a gentleman whom he had previously ridiculed, and in a subdued and anxious manner inquiring whether his life-preserver was not capable of saving them both. The man replied that he would most gladly extend any help in his power, but it was *made only for one person* and was not warranted to sustain more.

Reader, THERE IS A HOPE WHICH IS AS AN ANCHOR TO THE SOUL, BOTH SURE AND STEADFAST. The ground on which it rests is the mercy of God through our Lord Jesus Christ. The time is coming when you *will certainly need it*. Life may now be like a smooth and sunny sea, but very soon you will be amid the swellings of Jordan.

A good hope in Christ *is certain to save*. Never did one perish who possessed it. It was never known to disappoint in the time of need. Millions have been saved by it: and God has promised that it shall never make ashamed. Is it not wise for you to obtain it?

To say the least *it can do you no harm*, should there be no judgment nor retribution. It cannot encumber you during your lifetime. It is worth every thing even in prosperous days and beneath cloudless skies. The sense of security which religion creates is of great price. To know that whatever may happen, you are safe; to be confident that "neither life nor death, things present nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord;" is it not worth more than all silver and gold?

Moreover, this hope *may easily be obtained*. It is "set before you." It is pressed upon your acceptance. Because of this, do not say that you can obtain it at any time. For this is not true. There is no time to forge and bend an anchor when the storm is raging. If you postpone repentance too

long, disappointment and destruction will overtake you *without remedy*. Do not delay the pursuit of religion. Seek it first of all. Pious friends entreat you to seek it now. The experience of those who have delayed too long, and died "without hope," warns you to be wise in season.

Be careful that your *hope is of the right kind*. There is a hope which perisheth when God taketh away the soul. There are false spirits, false religions, false hopes, and counterfeit graces. Examine well the hope which is in you. Be sure that it rests on the right foundation, Jesus Christ being the chief corner-stone.

If you have found hope in Christ, *take care of your hope*. Protect it from injury; watch it; keep it with *all diligence*. And as you cannot tell the day nor the hour when the Son of man cometh, be always ready. Let your light be trimmed and burning as men that wait for their Lord. Death can never be unexpected, if you are always anticipating it; never sudden if you are always prepared for it.

Remember, that religion is a concern between your own soul and God. The conduct of others is no excuse for you. He that is wise, is wise for himself; and he that scorneth he alone must bear it. Soon, very soon the hour of trial will come. The winds will blow, the rain fall, and the floods come, and the great storm beat against your house. You must go down into the river of death alone. Friends cannot go with you; they cannot help you. But "he that believeth in Jesus is safe," even when the waves and billows go over his soul. The arm of the Redeemer will keep you from sinking; and amidst the pains and mysteries of dying, you may lift up your head and say, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee;" and a voice from heaven shall answer, "Fear not: when thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee;" and borne along by the "everlasting arms" which are beneath you you shall reach in safety that peaceful shore where the grateful spirit shall rest with God.